CHAPTER - II

HYPOCRISY IN ACADEME

The University or any seat of learning is known for its idealistic pursuit of knowledge and truth. It is usually connected with intellectuality and nobility. Teachers teaching in institutions are generally regarded as demigods (by most cultures) whose main aim is to work tirelessly towards the advancement of knowledge and reason. Indian myths and ethos especially place teachers or Gurus even before God - Matha (mother), Pitha (father), Guru (teacher), Deivam (God). But most campus novels, basing their plots in campuses, endeavour to portray the lives of the inmates in all truth and verity, which ultimately gives a shocking revelation in having upset that order. They propound or exhibit the hypocrisies and pretensions that prevail in the ‘closed world’ of the campus, and thereby picture the teachers in a dark light. The teachers are dragged down from the pedestal of being dainty Gurus to being mere selfish, ambitious, hypocritical, unintellectual power mongers. These novels show the people on campuses as being highly selfish, over-ambitious and capable of ignominious acts. The campus novelists present the absurdities inherent in the academic set up and bring out the follies and foibles, eccentricities, desires, ambitions and lustful nature of the academicians.

This chapter aims at examining the ways in which the Indian campus novelists taken up for study foreground the flaws and hypocrisies present in universities. The novelists aim at nullifying the false image of the academics who show themselves as superior know-alls and who are interested in immolating themselves for the cause of knowledge and education. These novelists annihilate this untrue image and try to portray the insiders’ real experiences.
The Indian English novelists viz., Prema Nandakumar, Rita Joshi, Rani Dharker and Anuradha Marwah Roy, and the Tamil novelists Prabhanjan, Panjangam, Balakumaran and Jaisakthi, in their respective novels, satirize the whole academics of Education, and thereby, ridicule the pursuit of reason itself. They mock at the very steps taken for the process of advancement of knowledge. They bring out the frailties of the university teachers and show how these teachers use their knowledge and learnedness for politicking and satisfying their selves.

Their masks of intellectuality, in order to show themselves as superior, are torn off by the writers. The professors are portrayed as being the antithesis of what education originally meant them to be, and their pretentious efforts in propagating themselves as possessing an unquenched thirst for knowledge is satirized by these writers. They highlight the unintellectual interests of the professors and show that there is little hope for education. Education has become more and more business-like and materialistic desires have engulfed the minds of the academics.

These novelists also show universities as the most uncultured and unethical places in the world where, to express in Janice Rossen’s words, “the college members live cheek by jowl”, and where, “one lived in social intimacy with men one disliked” (19, 119). The academics are also charged with neglecting their duty of dedicating themselves to true research and teaching, and their addiction to laziness is deftly delineated. Prema Nandakumar displays sarcastically the ways in which academicians spend their working hours, in the following manner:

some minimal research, and of course notional teaching; a few pecks at administering the department; evenings in the staff room relaxing with whiffs of the latest scandal, a
gin-and-lemon, and a game of table-tennis; attendance at some official dinner or other of which there was never a serious shortage; flying hither and thither to choose Professors and Readers, viva Ph.D. candidates, attend examinership meetings, or participate in seminars and conferences! (AS 214)

This has become the routine way of the world of the University. In short, as the protagonist of the Atom and the Serpent (1982), Dr. Vatsa feels, the academics have “hardly” been doing anything “in spite of an ‘active’ schedule!”(AS 214) Despite holding a responsible job, they are “slumbering with the soporific placidity of the lotus-eaters” (AS 214). They are also jealous of one another and there is a constant squabble for power and position. They are hypocritical to the core and exhibit two-faced or even deceitful nature in all dealings. Hypocrisy lies everywhere in the campus, and ambition, desire and pretensions dominate the place.

At this point, it is essential to know what exactly ‘hypocrisy’ means, since this chapter will concentrate on foregrounding the hypocritical behaviour of the academicians as portrayed in a few Indian academic novels. The word ‘hypocrisy’ usually carries a negative connotation and would be highly shocking when this term is applied to people who are in service-oriented jobs like teaching. Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia on the internet, defines hypocrisy as “the act of persistently pretending to hold beliefs, opinions, virtues, feelings, qualities, or standards that one does not actually hold. Hypocrisy is thus a kind of lie.”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypocrisy)

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2000) edited by Sally Wehmeier defines hypocrisy as “(disapproving) behavior in which sb pretends to have moral standards or opinions that they do not actually have” (640).
Hypocritical people are people who suffer from two selves – an inner one and an outer. They constantly shuffle between pretensions and reality. Samuel Johnson in *Rambler No. 14* explains ‘hypocrisy’ in the following manner:

Nothing is more unjust, however common, than to charge with hypocrisy him that expresses zeal for those virtues which he neglects to practice; since he may be sincerely convinced of the advantages of conquering his passions, without having yet obtained the victory, as a man may be confident of the advantages of a voyage, or a journey, without having courage or industry to undertake it, and may honestly recommend to others, those attempts which he neglects himself (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypocrisy).

Hypocrisy thus means pretensions – pretending that the other unknown cruel, cunning, sly, manipulative and evil self do not exist when those are very much present. The double standards of individuals are traits of hypocrisy. The novelists taken up for study clearly bring out the hypocritical nature of the academicians. They highlight the flaws of the academicians and bring in their unacademic qualities that accompany their desires and ambitions.

Prema Nandakumar is strongly concerned about the frailties of University teachers and students. She laughs at the pretentious steps taken by the Professors and students towards the false advancements of knowledge. The very beginning of *Atom and the Serpent* clearly brings in the image of the ‘groves of academy’ with the chirping of birds and forest visualization. Through this image, it symbolically shows the University to be a place full of intrigues, strife, passion, ambition and hypocrisy. It talks about the Vice Chancellor’s ‘villa’ that is ‘grim’ (AS 11) in nature. The very contemplation of Vatsa, the narrator, who is also the protagonist of the novel, about the naming of the ‘villa’, which sounds similar to ‘will’ highlights the kind of
power that is embodied in it. He thinks that may be the VC’s house is named so since the ambitious and power-filled Vice-Chancellor needs “all the will-power in the world to sit pretty in his chair” (AS 11).

The protagonist, Dr. Kamalapati Vatsa is introduced to the readers as a poor Visiting Professor of the provincial University, and his being in a stupor after having plunged into a grand dinner hosted by the Staff Association shows his inclination towards a luxurious life.

In fact, the very beginning of the novel, itself, hints at the ambitious nature of the teachers. The protagonist Dr. Vatsa comes to the University as a visiting Professor to the Department of Atomic Research and also to deliver “the Rao Bhadur Vidya Sagara Endowment lecture.” He feels himself a “cog in the giant atomic complex in Bombay” (AS 16), and hence he is stubborn that he must make a name” (AS 16). Therefore, he arrives under the pretext of an intellectual lecture and with very high hopes of getting a good press report. He believes that this report would get him his anticipated higher post. He expects to get at least “a detailed report that he could place on his Chief’s table in Bombay” (AS 16). He feels that an added, “good press report would be a proper appendage to his file” (AS 16). This desire of Dr. Vatsa itself shows that behind his intellectual notion of delivering a lecture is the idea to procure legitimate academic credentials.

Dr. Vatsa’s ambition is high, and more than a kind of intellectual passion, it is his materialistic passion that comes out. He is jealous of the enormous Bentley car that the Vice-Chancellor drives around in and his materialistic mind immediately compares it with his own bug-fiat that is most of the time in the repair shop in Bombay. Hence, Vatsa decides that he should not miss this “first chance to deliver a public lecture in a university” (AS 15), and
thereby, add on to his academic credentials that would eventually escalate him to a higher position.

Vatsa’s ambition is also goaded on by people like the Head of the Department of Atomic Research, Prof. Yaugandharayana. Prof. Yaugandharayana is a foreign.returned Professor who is highly materialistic and who unabashedly imitates foreign behaviour in every way. Being the head of the department, and involving himself in too many foreign assignments and administrative preoccupations, he hardly keeps himself “abreast of new publications” (AS 35). He is interested neither in his subject nor in his department, and has only a bitter contempt for his colleagues.

The same is the case with Sheela Rani, a Lecturer belonging to the Econometrics department. She is like Prof. Yaugandharayana, keen on reaching the top of the ladder of the University without bothering about the welfare of the students. She is very keen on getting the Professorship of the department, but does nothing that would add to her credentials, like publishing research papers or pursuing a higher degree like a Ph.D. She sends her students to the library under the pretext of “special assignment” (AS 165) during her class hours in order to attend to her “deferred increment” (AS 164) or to devise various means of making the Vice-Chancellor consent to getting her, her Professorship.

Her husband, Dr. Dattatreya, who is also the Principal of the University, is also, like her, highly ambitious. He aims at becoming the Vice-Chancellor of the University, since his family members have served the University in all capacities except as the Vice-Chancellor. His cunning and cruel machinations in order to achieve this and the post of Professor, for his wife, are devious.
The ambitious nature of the occupants of the University is skillfully brought out when Prema Nandakumar voices through her Vice-Chancellor that they are more worried and impatient about being a “Lecturer, Reader or Professor” (AS 187) instead of being a Guru or an Achariya in the truest sense of the word. The Vice-Chancellor in an address at an intellectual meet says that a scholar is always “in an indecent hurry to vault from research studentship to lectureship and on to readership and finally to Professorship instead of sitting down to do a bit of solid research” (AS 108).

Prema Nandakumar, referring to the ambitious nature of teachers says that the University has become “a seething unacademic pond of viperous ambitions and animosities” (AS 82). There is always a “clamour for Sabbatical leave and for foreign assignments and roving National Professorships” (AS 197). She opines that a teacher is more bothered about the UGC Grants or Foundation Fellowships rather than being a true dedicated researcher. Here, the author showing the teaching faculty’s keen interest in research, not for research’s sake but for publications that directly or indirectly act as a catalyst in achieving their materialistic ends provides much scope for satire. However, Prema Nandakumar’s satire is not as scathing or pungent as Rani Dharker’s The Virgin Syndrome (1997).

In The Virgin Syndrome, Rani Dharker lashes out at the ambitious nature of the staff and the manipulative means by which they achieve power and position. She mocks at the big crowd teeming in at the Vice Chancellor’s house “every morning for (his) darshan” (VS 136). She laughs at the ways in which they genuflect before him in order to get into his good books. These clever and arty staff attain their goals of climbing on to the upper rung in the ladder of Professorship, merely by adulating and genuflecting before the Vice-Chancellor. Their
mediocrity makes them attain things through their constant obsequiousness and sycophancy and not because of their brains.

A similar pungent sarcasm is found in *An Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* (1992) also. In *An Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme*, Rita Joshi points out through her heroine JR, how teachers fight through their Association for their selfish gains. For them, their “first priority is better facilities for themselves” (S. Narayan 154). This priority of the teachers makes Joshi directly comment that the teachers’ lot was getting worse.

The novel portrays one of the most hypocritical and ambitious-natured Principals. This Principal, like Dattatreya of *Atom and the Serpent* and Azhagesan of *Kagitha Manidargal* (1995) is highly desirous and selfish, and adopts wicked means to achieve her ends. She is more bothered about her own extension and waits for a chance to show to the outside world her “acumen for administration” (Paul 74). She is autocratic and dominates the teachers working under her administration. Her bossiness knows no limits when she terrorizes young people, especially, temporary hands and the teachers on probation. She overworks them and is known for increasing their sense of insecurity. Instead of boosting them with heartening and encouraging words, she would bully them with her domineering power. This novel brings in the clear-cut academic hierarchical exhibition of power, and the tenured and scrabbling lecturers are thrown to a position of few choices. Knowing that revolting against her would put them in trouble, they are left with no other choice but to do her bidding.

This Principal hates the trade unionism of teachers and hates their involvement in constant fight against the management. This does not mean that she is an ideal academic administrator who is purely bothered about the development of the college, but only shows that she thrives on dictatorship.
This dictatorial and despotic Principal exploits the teachers for her own selfish growth. She, with her wit, puts down people in a clever manner and manipulates them so skillfully that the teachers do not even sense they are being victimized. JR is one such newly appointed teacher who is asked to take care of the College Drama Society. The heroine is intimidated by the Principal’s eloquence, and hence, concedes to the demand without protesting and works hard at it. When all other teachers boycott their classes and are on strike through their union, DULA (Delhi University Lecturers Association), JR alone prepares for the play. She selects the play and conducts rehearsals with the students.

The Principal strictly orders her to carry out the rehearsals and is very particular that the play should be performed as planned. She does this not for the improvement of the college but for her own selfish ends. She “is interested in the play only because it will attract the attention of the V.I.P.s towards her and will also increase the chances for extension as Principal” (Paul 74). Here, it can be seen that the teacher who works and carries out the Principal’s orders keeps receiving assignment after assignment, and is also thoroughly victimized, whereas the dissidents are left undisturbed without any special assignment apart from the routine of teaching. The Principal is more interested in the protocol of inviting Ambassadors and MPs so that her name will be registered in their minds and the accumulation of funds will thus, be made possible. The helpless teacher has to follow the commands of her superior and has to do it even under the strained situation where “everything else seems main / Though teaching seems to be on wane” (Paul 74).

Another ambitious Lecturer portrayed here is MR who criticizes other lecturers as mere “dumbbells” and “non effectuals” (ANR 17) while she herself is a mean hack who involves in
gossiping and backbiting. She poses as “the poetess of the staff” (ANR 14) and dreams of publishing her book.

The campus novelists do not ridicule the ambitious nature of teachers just for the sake of ridiculing them but only satirize them, since their ambitions obstruct them from possessing genuine care of the students’ welfare and the real progress and dissemination of knowledge.

These writers expose their discovery that the enthusiasm, which surrounds the university in increasing research and knowledge is farcical and that the university’s attempts in producing compulsory researchers or compulsorily turning them into researchers only ends in “a terrific amount of waste materials that moldered on the shelves of university libraries or was ultimately carried out to the dump by the scavenger” (Herrick 165-67). The same view is expressed by Srividya Natarajan and Prema Nandakumar in their respective novels although the tones of the writers varies.

It is an ambitious nature that forbids some of the teachers from concentrating on the students and that makes them deviate from their duty of completing the syllabus and the like. When they are more bothered about their own priorities, they give the least importance to students’ affairs. Geetika, in The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta (1993) narrates how during her M.A. studies at the Desertvadi Government College, one of her Lecturers, Mrs. Sharma fails to evince interest in the students for her subject - ‘Twentieth Century American Literature’. This makes the students not only bored of her classes, but also incites them to play mischief. Mrs. Sharma, a post-graduate teacher is not interested in upgrading her knowledge in the subject, and hence, she is not “familiar with these writers” of “Twentieth Century American Literature” that “had been inexplicably introduced in the course that very year” (HEGM 3). In fact, “none of the lecturers were familiar with these writers” and “the university that designed
the syllabus was miles away” (HEGM 3). She, in fact, shamelessly asks her own students if they “had found” anything on Wallace Stevens whose poetry, she feels has “defeated” (HEGM 4) her. She also fumes that “there is not a single book available on Wallace Stevens” (HEGM 4).

This shows the laziness of the teacher who even at the dead end of the semester is not bothered to complete the syllabus. The teacher simply whiles away her time, maybe by, as Geetika’s mother says, knitting “sweaters during spare time” (HEGM 7) or by going “right back to their homes after spending four hours in college” (HEGM 10). They are not bothered to complete the syllabus for the students, and simply leave to the students, the job of searching for material and preparing for the examinations.

This kind of ignorance of the subject on the part of the teachers is brought out in another Indian English novel, Joker in the Pack: An Irreverent View of Life at IIMS (2007) too. Here, the protagonist, Shekhar Varma, is a BIT student in an insignificant college of the Delhi University. Shekhar convinces his girl friend about bunking classes saying that in that mediocre college that “was the ‘best’ in DU as per conventional wisdom” (JP 18), “the professors didn’t know their subjects” and hence, “attending classes (there) was a waste of time and energy” (JP 29). If at all students attend classes, it is not for the ‘mind-blowing’ lectures delivered by the professors but for “the minimum attendance requirements of the University – set at 70 per cent” (JP 29).

Geetika talks of another such lecturer who usually went on leave from college, and hence, would not complete his syllabus. He often depresses the students and disillusion them by wriggling out of his duty. He is a very sarcastic man and a communist. Though he teaches
English, he feels it against his principle to teach an alien literature. Despite his students constantly reminding him of completion of the syllabus, he evade doing it.

His interests are in holding various ‘kavi-sammelans’ to improve the aesthetic sense of the people in Desertvadi. Once, one of his students, Tony writes on the blackboard “In today’s kavi-sammelan, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley have to be read aloud with notes and annotations” (HEGM 23). Despite this shameful reminder, the teacher leaves it incomplete and is indifferent towards the forthcoming examinations and students’ preparation for it.

Another such Lecturer who is satirized in the novel is Ma’am Neela Gupta. Ma’am Neela Gupta had been to England on a British Council Scholarship and is the youngest of the lecturers in the college. Being a foreign-returned lecturer, she often expresses her dislike to teach in such a rural college as “awful and stultifying” (HEGM 34). She keeps ruminating about foreign trips and works without interest in her present rural college. She thinks all the time about getting a better work place.

These sorts of ambitious-natured teachers, who are not imposing lecturers, make Geetika even hate the college. She is not satisfied with her teachers’ limited knowledge and tells her father that she finds her Government college unchallenging. She often contemplates about joining elite colleges like The College in Lutyenabad, which is reputed to be the best. Her parents being lecturers themselves advise her that it is not necessary to study in elite institutions in order to do well.

Anuradha Marwah Roy, like other campus fiction writers, seems to point out that if elite universities or colleges make false claims of improving the standards of education by making research and publications compulsory, some of the small city-based or rural educational institutions have faculty who are composed and comfortable to grind the same old stuff without
attempting at any kind of improvement. If teachers in elite colleges pretend as if keen on intellectual expansion by reading and writing something in the name of research, the staff in rural institutions, avoid research openly stating that it would obstruct their interest and dedication towards students and teaching. They are contended with little knowledge and their aggressive nature is not for increase of knowledge as it is for increase of wealth.

Prabhanjan’s *Kagitha Manidargal* shows how the ambitious nature of some students, like Nachellai, makes them sexual preys of their teachers. Despite being married, Nachellai, Prof. Azhagesan’s ward becomes his permanent mistress. She obliges her professor’s sexual desires in order to complete her Ph.D. easily and to get a job in the University itself, through him. It is her ruthless aim that makes her submissive to her guide and her guide Azhagesan is able to have a hold over her, even after she attains a good position.

In *Oru Dalit, Oru Adikari, Oru Maranam* (2005), we see the lecturers belonging to the lower caste intimidating another lower caste teacher, Balan, for reprimanding the students since it is their ambitious nature to be in position that makes them forget their academic hierarchical order and be subdued to the students.

In Balakumaran’s *Snehamulla Singam* (1991), Chittirai Pandian’s deterioration is because of his ambitious nature. The novella, *An Awakening* shows that a person with less ambition and who is highly academic in nature, finds no place in the academy. JR dedicated to her job, and who believes she can bring about some change in the existing corrupt system, quits her position as a Lecturer and is shown as changing her very career itself. She takes up to writing and prefers to be a creative writer instead of a teacher. The same thing happens with another unambitious academic, Subramanian, the Vice-Chancellor in Prabhanjan’s *Kagitha Manidargal*. 
Geetika, in *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* is ambitious; hence, she does not quit her job. She manages to continue her lectureship despite the problems she faces in her personal life. The unnamed narrator of *The Virgin Syndrome* gives up her job as a schoolteacher and a University Lecturer because of her inability to cope with the hypocrisies of the campus and of her own unambitious academic nature. This shows that a person who is sensitive to the flaws and hypocrisies of the academy cannot survive in the University. They are simply disillusioned with the academic experience because of the “hypocrisy of the college society and the sterility of the personalities” (Lyons 134) residing there.

The go-ahead nature of the teachers makes them go out of the way in involving themselves in indecent acts and provokes them to plagiarize without feeling ashamed. They even go to the extent of stealing their own students’ work. *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* brings in the case of Dipankar Bannerji, primarily a student from the most yearned and sought after University, the Capital University. Dipankar, a meritorious student quits his studies at Capital University and migrates to Jana University because of the “ideological differences” (HEGM 110) he had with his Supervisor. Capital University, a University much reputed for its quality-oriented lecturers and students, is seen in a different light when Dipankar tells of the fraudulent act of his teacher there. He says that the main reason for his quitting the University is that his Supervisor brazenly plagiarized his work without any acknowledgement. He, “with a self-deprecatory laugh” and utter contempt informs that his Supervisor “did not even see it fit to correct a few spelling mistakes I [he] had made” (HEGM 110).

Here, we can see that it is the ruthless nature of the Supervisor, which had made him copy his own student’s work. Moreover, since it is from his own student, he did not deem it
necessary that the situation might demand the basic courtesy of getting the permission of his student. Dipankar, unwilling to work under such fake intellectuals and fraudulent teachers who merely pose themselves as well-learned persons, migrates to another University.

Another instance of plagiarizing that Anuradha Marwah Roy portrays in this novel is the case of the wife of Lakshmi’s supervisor. Lakshmi’s supervisor, an extremely intelligent man, helps his wife in writing a paper that she has to present in an intellectual gathering. His wife, a Lecturer, working in the School of International Studies, instead of presenting her own work, casually reads out the paper written by her husband and receives huge applause from the audience. This not only shows the ambitious nature of the students but also the corrupt practices of the academy and the deterioration of true research.

Prabhanjan portrays one such case in Kagitha Manidargal, where Reader Kannan, in spite of holding a responsible and respectable job, involves himself in an ignominious act of publishing his student’s article as his own. The student, despite the injustice caused to her, remains dumb.

It is the teacher’s ambitious nature, which makes him do this, and it is this act, which makes him lose the affection of a student and shows him in a malevolent perspective. Prabhanjan, through this incident, subtly brings out the cheap mentality of the lecturers, who are interested in plagiarizing and cleverly stealing from the students to increase their academic contributions.

In a “publish or perish” (AS 293) environment of the university, the lecturers even adopt crooked means to somehow get something, be it their own or something stolen, published. They either plagiarize or write unreadable works that are not worth publishing. This aspect is mocked at by Prema Nandakumar in a sarcastic manner. She hits at the bad quality of
namesake publications of research papers. She says that living in a ‘do or die’ situation, “all the faculty members have suddenly blossomed into writers.” The Vice-Chancellor cannot “reject” any application for grants since all are “equally worthless” (AS 293). “No bookseller is willing to lift our publications” (AS 292) because of its unworthy content. That is why, when the Registrar informs the Vice-Chancellor about the publications that are burnt up in the riot, the Vice-Chancellor is “not particularly sorry to see the publications vaporized” (AS 293). He is in fact happy at the “good riddance of mad rubbish” (AS 292) and feels that a two lakh grant that the Press Officer demanded to extend storage facilities to store the new publications coming in, is now saved.

Similar mockery is exhibited in Srividya Natarajan’s No Onions Nor Garlic (2006) also. Prof. Pattabhiraman’s attempts at getting his two books published were in vain. Only when he bribes Mr. Varadarajan of V.R.V. Publishers he is able to publish his first book Daddy, What is the Significance of the Poonal. The author, like Prema Nandakumar, wittily points out that V.R.V. Publishers, unable to “resist the rustling music that Professor Ram’s crisp hundred-rupee notes made” (NONG 166) had agreed to publish the book. They had printed 1000 copies and just like how the unworthy book of Dattatreya in Atom and the Serpent was neglected by the public, so was Prof. Ram’s. Mr. Varadarajan had very neatly disposed off the books without even sending copies to reviewers. Mr. Swaminathan, Prof. Ram’s biological father, had reviewed it in The Bindhu but since there was no “clamour for his immortal work” (NONG 167) the copies lay bundled up in some sacks in the godown of V.R.V. Publishers.

Professor Ram, an indomitable person, believes that though ignored in his own country, he will definitely gain popularity abroad. With this abundant faith, he sends his second book Mute but not Inglorious: William Poopnoodle’s Life and Poetry to more than two dozen
publishers. The author humorously comments on the way in which the books are returned to Professor Ram immediately:

But each publisher Professor Ram sent the manuscript to punt it back to him so expeditiously that Professor Ram wondered if there was an echo somewhere. Indeed, some experts calculated that if Professor Ram kept on receiving rejection slips at the present rate, the world’s remaining rain forests were likely to disappear by the year 2009. It is a fact that Professor Ram made a tidy little income every month by selling these markers of his failure by the kilo to the wastepaper mart. Indeed, Professor Ram may be forgiven for thinking that there was an international conspiracy to avoid publishing his work (NONG 167).

Such is the sarcasm that the campus novelists exhibit about the publishing for namesake tendency among academicians.

Prema Nandakumar also mocks at the committees appointed to check the readability or worthiness of publications. When the Vice-Chancellor expresses his weariness about the unworthy write-ups that need to be published, Vatsa suggests that a screening committee could be appointed. To this, the Vice-Chancellor contemptuously says that there is nothing for the committee to do since, “If it is a thesis that has been accepted, the committee thinks it should be passed. Or, if it is a series of disjointed essays, or ‘papers’ as they call them, then again the committee says, yes” (AS 292). The Vice-Chancellor ridicules the unworthy publications thus, and says, “there’s soon going to be a paper famine” (AS 293). He pronounces so, since everyone is eager to publish something or the other.

Srividya Natarajan, unlike Prema Nandakumar, is more pungent and at the same time witty, when she says that the unworthy matters published by Professors are better used to get
rid of excreta than be used for scholarly purpose. She shows Caroline, a scholar, helping Professor Ram’s son Chunky with papers from Professor Ram’s book *Daddy* to clean himself after an upset tummy. Such is the scathing sarcasm that pours out from Srividya Natarajan on the unliftable publications that the over-ambitious academicians are in a hurry to publish.

It is the superficial nature of the lecturers that make them indifferent to their students when it comes to guiding them in their research work. Prema Nandakumar vividly brings out the frivolities that are associated with the acquiring of Ph.D.s. She ridicules the “artificial limit regarding the number of research students who may be assigned to a faculty member” (AS 220). She satirizes the ways in which a Ph.D. holder and a non-doctorate teacher equally ignore the improvement of the universities. She also sarcastically voices out the common manipulations and disagreeable ways in which a scholar attains his Ph.D. She lashes out through Sheela Rani that

All these Ph.D.s. are shams and shampoos, and in America, I hear, you can get a Ph.D. for psittacine performances or for working out the average of a middle class porcupine’s tail... You just assemble a few pages of plagiarized parrotry, then appoint the negotiable chap in the neighbouring dump as the external expert, and hey presto! You are a Ph.D., one of the neo Brahmins of the academic hierarchy… (AS 221)

Prema Nandakumar opines through her character Dharma that a radical change in the present system of education is essential and one must avoid the temptations to form a thesis out of fifty percent plagiarism and fifty percent quotations. She calls the present system of education a “decadent and non-dying system” (AS 221) which has corrupted the ideal setup of universities.
Like Sheela Rani of Atom and the Serpent, is Clavercin of Robert Herrick’s Chimes, an American novel written in 1926. Clavercin’s disgust for a dissertation or a thesis is expressed thus:

The very sight of a dissertation or thesis gave Clavercin an attack of mental nausea (for he felt that) for one useful, illuminating piece of research sponsored by the University … there must be at least a hundred utterly arid products, whose sole utility was to train some second – rate mind, fit only for elementary teaching – how to use a card-catalogue and other apparatus of scholarship (qtd. in Lyons 137).

Through this statement of Clavercin, the writer suggests that Higher Education forced upon the student cannot bring any good results. The University, in order to raise the moral and economic standards of the nation enforces on students the compulsion of higher degrees and publications. However, this only increases the burden of the teachers, which in turn leads to unflattering practices.

The hypocrisies and unbecoming methods involved in research work is brought out lucidly in the The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta. The superficial and shallow ways in which Supervisors or Guides lend their guidance to students and their disinterestedness in them is shown through the portrayal of Geetika’s M.Phil. Research Guide - a Sorbonne-returned Lecturer. This lecturer, until the end of the course, keeps Geetika in the dark without actually discussing the text with her. She actually forces Geetika and her two other classmates, who wanted to work on novels for their dissertations, to work on Structuralism.

She hypocritically tells Geetika that she believes in the “open system” and “wouldn’t like to impose a text” on them but had exactly thrust upon them, her subject of preference - structuralism. Her mad craze for structuralism makes her behave like a “crusader to spread the
doctrine among the non-believers” (HEGM 118). She had been introduced to the fatal inevitability of Structuralism at Sorbonne and this makes her attack the pretensions of the fossilized Capital University that had never heard of the famous Structuralists. She never really took any pain to teach her students in a committed manner and spends not more than ten minutes with them to discuss the dissertation. She only keeps praising Sorbonne where the students “are so alive to the critical theory” (HEGM 119) and attacking “the sheer backwardness of the Indian Academia” (HEGM 118). She also charges the students for lacking the “commitment (that) is needed for academics” (HEGM 119) but will never spell out the methodology nor discuss the texts with them. When she got down to the practical details of explaining structuralism to the students, “her lectures got noticeably less fiery” (HEGM 118).

This sort of guidance makes Geetika feel that “perhaps this was how post-graduate teaching was supposed to be” (HEGM 119). However, later she realizes that this Sorbonne-returned Lecturer is inefficient as every meeting with her is like the first, and she gets to hear a lot of uncomplimentary news about her. People said that she had done nothing in Sorbonne, “except present a paper” and “had suddenly started wearing spectacles in order to become an intellectual with a vengeance.” Her inefficiency showed itself when “she landed an assignment with the Sahitya Academi to edit an anthology of ‘Indian Criticism’” but did not fare well in it (HEGM 121). This instance also shows how academics respect foreign-returned teachers without really identifying their true caliber.

Geetika is often accused by her Supervisor of being accustomed to imposing interpretations on the text and forgetting its concrete reality. Geetika and her friend Lakshmi, a Ph.D. scholar of Economics, keeping in mind the fallacious standards of this Lecturer, do not respect her in her absence and nickname her as ‘Sorbonne’ and criticize her for her
disinterestedness in students. Lakshmi, who is passionate about her subject, and who has the reputation of being an eccentric genius, is angry with Geetika’s supervisor who is given a flat in the prime area of the city and who is being highly paid. She abuses her by saying that benefits are given to her not for being bored with students but to ‘guide’ them in the true sense of the word. In her anger, she advises Geetika to “dump her”, “apply for a scholarship abroad” and “get out” (HEGM 137).

This is the case with most Indian scholars. Most of the Indian intellectuals feel that things would be different in foreign nations but the experience of really studying abroad too would be the same, since the inmates of those campuses also exhibit the same feelings. For instance, the protagonist, Gopal Kumar of Anurag Mathur’s The Inscrutable Americans (1991) feels that though foreign institutions have all the required facilities for study, the “standard of studies” there “is not so high as in India” (IA 54). Moreover, the great number of satirical academic novels produced in Britain and America, also portray disillusionment with academy.

Geetika’s disillusionment with her supervisor shows itself when she says that “structuralism was a disease that my (her) supervisor had caught in Sorbonne” (HEGM 101). She says with an unpleasant feeling that she did not have the faintest idea what her dissertation was to be on, although she “was taking copious notes” (HEGM 101). She sarcastically says that they took notes from their teacher “with heads bent obediently on the note book to glean these pearls of wisdom” (HEGM 103), though what the teacher dictated were not worthy.

When Geetika feels deserted by her supervisor, she seeks the help of Professor Ranganathan. Ranganathan, knowing the intellectual caliber of Geetika, feels sorry for her. He tells her that he is not in a position to help her since “a certain academic etiquette” forbids him from giving her “concrete suggestions” (HEGM 148). He also threatens her that if her
Supervisor comes to know of her dissatisfaction and her approaching other teachers for guidance, she might even go to the extent of holding back her degree for years, which will become disastrous to her career. He tells her that it is unfortunate that “people like her exist and flourish under our University system” (HEGM 148). He advises her to try to complete the whole thing quickly and to get rid of her supervisor at the earliest.

Geetika’s friend Lakshmi works under her intelligent and “intense looking” bearded supervisor who would often “tear the reactionary policies of the Government to shreds” (HEGM 100). This Supervisor, a genius in his field is rather proud and “much too bright” (HEGM 138) that “he seems to have concluded what I (Lakshmi) am going to find out after three years of work…” (HEGM 138)

Lakshmi feels that “he is tying me (her) down in a way” (HEGM 138) and says that she “can’t be tied to his ideology” and “has to know about the rest of the world” (HEGM 138). Hence, she decides to quit doing research and go abroad. This kind of suffocation that the research scholar feels with her supervisor is because of the supervisor’s domineering nature.

The corrupt practices of the academy and the deterioration of true research are shown when Lakshmi makes fun of her supervisor’s wife who reads out the paper written by her husband in the School of International Studies and receives praise from the crowd.

Prabhanjan, in his Kagitha Manidargal makes a satirical portrayal of teachers who get their Ph.D.s. without possessing real knowledge. He hits on the Tamil Professor Azhagesan who is not well versed in Tamil Literature but who teaches Tamil just because he possesses a Doctorate.

The detailed description of how Azhagesan obtained his doctoral degree is a harsh criticism on the university and its ways. He mocks at Azhagesan’s inefficiency and lampoons
his and his guide Arumugan’s belief in the ancient Gurukula system of education. Arumugan makes Azhagesan do all sorts of household chores, right from washing his and his wife’s clothes to buying vegetables and groceries. The author mockingly adumbrates that Azhagesan’s years of dedicated research in this line gets him his much-awaited Ph.D.

Azhagesan faithfully follows his master in guiding his wards. He uses his economically backward student Sudalai as an unpaid servant and his wife adds credit to her husband by properly utilizing him for all her household chores. Azhagesan outshines his master in guiding his students and shows advancements in ways of using them. He goes a step further and uses his women scholars for his sexual pursuits too, which his guide Arumugan had failed to do.

The research scholars comply with the wishes of their research supervisors in order to achieve their ambitions. Their ambitious nature instills in them a kind of shamelessness that makes them perform unpleasant things also, for their guides.

Exhibiting the ambitious and selfish nature of the teachers and the blind obedience of the students is not new in the Indian scenario. Dhronachariya, the great Guru of the Kuru Dynasty in The Mahabharata is portrayed as a selfish teacher who does injustice to Eklavya, a young tribal boy. Eklavya, rejected by Dhronachariya as a student, nevertheless takes him as his Guru and worships him. He practices relentlessly with his bow and arrow in front of Dhronachariya’s image and achieves expertise in the art of archery. Dhronachariya, having promised his student, Arjuna, that he would be the world’s best archer is unable to tolerate the excellent archery of Eklavya, a self-taught artist whom he never taught. He uses Eklavya’s blind obedience to him and asks him to give him his right thumb as his Guru Dakshana (wages for a teacher) for having used his image for learning. In spite of knowing that without the right
thumb it would be impossible for him to shoot arrows thereafter, Eklavya cuts off his right thumb and offers it to his Guru.

We see here, that it is Dhronachariya’s selfish motives that cast a slur on his otherwise lofty character. Dhronachariya’s demand arises from his selfish desire to show to the world that his student excels over others. In doing so, he fails to hold himself the dignity of being a real Guru or a teacher whose main aim should be diffusion of knowledge irrespective of caste, colour and creed. Dhronachariya refuses to teach Eklavya since his “academic etiquette” (HEGM 148) allows him to teach only Kshatriyas and Brahmin youths.

If Eklavya offered his thumb to his Guru, it was out of his noble obedience and reverence for him, without expecting anything in return from him. The campus novelists ironically seem to say that the present day students too are obedient to their gurus, but their obedience is out of their pushy nature. The present day students do anything including satisfying the demands of the teachers sexually since they are blinded by their ruthless ambitions.

The academic novelists make ironic portrayals of the conduct of seminars and conferences. Seminars and conferences are conducted more as rituals than to really enhance knowledge in the subject. These writers show the university community as being victims of intellectuality and are shown as not being interested in expanding the frontiers of intellectual freedom. It shows them to be involving themselves in unnecessary student and faculty politics. They show only a few to be sincerely involved in their subjects.

Prema Nandakumar in her novel Atom and the Serpent laughs at the pretentious steps taken by the academicians and students towards false advancements of knowledge. She shows how “an all-pervading sloth has dulled the minds of both teacher and student alike” (Naik iv).
Vatsa comes to the Provincial University as a Visiting Professor mainly to win a good press report by presenting papers. He expects that a good press report will get him his expected promotion in Bombay.

Prema Nandakumar shows how lecturers give little importance to research and research-oriented activities. Any conference or seminar is supposed to be an intellectual gathering where “the entire university community is supposed to take part” (AS 108), in at least the inaugural lecture. But when Vatsa presents his inaugural lecture, there are “but five per cent of our real faculty strength” (AS 109). Prema Nandakumar ridicules the number present for the seminar through the following words:

those present no doubt congratulated themselves as the only intellectual giants interested in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, unlike the 475 who were absent and were fit only to play cards or carom in the Staff Association Room (AS 109).

Prema Nandakumar brings out the careless attitude that both the teacher and the taught hold against research. Once, for a routine seminar, arranged by Professor Yana with the help of his student Vandana, Rajashekhar, the paper presenter, absents himself. He ignores his seminar presentation in order to attend a film shooting. Instead of being enraged at this, Yana curiously asks about Rajashekhar’s role in it. He also proclaims his fatigue and accepts the suggestion of a Reader who says that it would be good to read a passage from a book and discuss it for the scheduled session.

Yana reproaches Vandana for not finding a volunteer to do that but at the same time is not bothered about the students’ unwillingness “to take an active part in the seminar.” It is shown by the author that Yana’s interest in the usual sessions of seminars is not real interest in “highly specialized research” (AS 145) but is done mainly to avoid his classes. Once, Yana
himself criticizes the kind of bogus research that is being done. He says, “the whole thing (of research) is an exercise in futility, almost a hoax.” He says that he feels “guilty (in) being a part of the racket” (AS 144).

The mediocrity of seminars is also brought out in the novel when Dharma, a Reader of the Atomic Research Department tells Vatsa that Vandana, a research scholar is sanctioned TA to take part in a seminar to be held in one of the newer Australian Universities. He tells him “her subject of course is downright silly, and it is surprising that the organizer of any decent seminar could have accepted it” (AS 219). Though it is understood from this that paper presentations are of no serious import and are done for namesake by academicians, it also throws light on the gossipy, hypocritical nature of academicians. Unable to digest the success of one another, ill talks circulate in gatherings like Staff Association Hall or any social or intellectual meet. Staff’s interest in weaving malicious stories out of their jealousies is brought out but at the same time, Yana’s promiscuity and licentiousness are scattered throughout the novel. This actually makes the reader believe that after all Vandana’s paper is not worthy for a seminar presentation. Moreover, Dharma also hints to Vatsa that his Professor and Head, Prof. Yaugandharayana is keen on sending Vandana and was also working on her extension there, since he too had plans of flying to Australia where he might probably have a promiscuous affair with her. The promiscuity or licentiousness of lecturers during Seminars or Conferences is portrayed by most campus writers. They show how the professors get into a flirty mood when they attend seminars and conferences. A very good example of a novel that extensively portrays this is David Lodge’s, Small World (1984).

Rani Dharker too does not fail to bring to limelight the deceptiveness and hypocrisies prevailing in the conduct of seminars and conferences. She, like the other campus novelists,
indicts the superficial ways in which seminars and conferences are performed more as necessary rituals rather than serious endeavours towards transmission and enhancement of knowledge.

The protagonist of *The Virgin Syndrome* is awe-struck by the supposed notions of seminars and visualizes them “as mental Olympics, with intellectuals coming together and winning gold for discussions, incisive analysis, mind blowing revelations.” However, the mediocrity of most minds participating there disillusioned her. She is disappointed at the way in which people regard this serious affair as mere “networking” where “you attend a seminar, see a new place, make contact with people who invite you to another seminar, where you meet other people ….” She is frustrated at the organizers who speech after speech, went into “self-congratulatory convulsions and an orgy of praise-bestowing on the delegates” (VS 112). Dharker here criticizes the unwanted formal inaugural ceremony at every seminar by commenting through her heroine that “we would have felt cheated had we not had a formal, opening ceremony at the seminar” (VS 112). She laughs at the organizers adulating one another as “distinguished Scholars” and praise themselves for having “worked hard but willingly” to conduct “this great international conference” (VS 112).

Dharker, by picturing silly discussions taking place during the conference satirizes the idiotic vein of the conferences. For instance, the heroine raises an issue so as to spell out the marital status of men also, like it is being done for women. She also brings out the usual flirtatious connotations associated with seminars and conferences. She says, “Dr (Mr) and Dr (Master) should be used for men as “Dr (Mrs) is used for women so that it will be convenient for “liberated single women” to “know whom to proposition.” This is taken seriously by the Chairman of the inaugural session and “for the remainder of that session there were comic
moments when the men were addressed” as was requested earlier (VS 113). During the interval in the conference, the hall is filled with hollow speeches, ostentatious talk, flirtatious behaviour, highfalutin gossips, and film discussions and so on, which show the lack of interest for intellectual expansion of knowledge among academics. A similar behaviour among the conferees is brought out in Srividya Natarajan’s *No Onions, Nor Garlic* also. Natarajan clearly shows that the conferees do not even wait for interval, for such discussions but even right through presentations, quietly discuss about things of their interests.

David Lodge’s *Small World* too pictures many such scenes during seminars and conferences. In fact, Lodge’s academic novels “constitute a humorous documentation on the academic life of many contemporary English departments of British and American universities and what happens in the name of academic exercise in the departments and seminars” (Sarmah). He indirectly comments on the futility of such abstruse conduct of academic seminars and conferences. Through a humorous account, he seems to be pinpointing at the reasons for the success or failure of conferences. Through various episodes, he strikes the note that the success of conferences does not depend on the academic excellence and insight they provide to the discipline but by the comfort and extravagant luxuries that are provided for the delegates. This is proved from the failure of the conference conducted by Swallow at Rummidge and the success of Morris Zapp’s Conference.

Zapp’s conference included more fun through wine, sightseeing tours and good food and kept the academic bindings to the minimum, whereas Swallow’s failed to provide fun and entertainment, and also the comforts that the delegates needed. Zapp once reveals the secret of the success of his conferences:
“Look Philip, I know you were disappointed by the turnout for your conference, but frankly, what you can expect if you’re asking people to live in those tacky dormitories and eat canteen meals? Food and accommodation are the most important things about any conference. If the people are happy with those, they’ll generate intellectual excitement. If they’re not, they’ll sulk, and sneer, and cut lectures.”

Philip shrugged. “I see your point, but people here just can’t afford that sort of luxury. Or their universities won’t pay for it.”

“Not in UK, they won’t. But when I worked here I discovered an interesting anomaly. You could only have up to fifty pounds a year or some such paltry sum to attend conferences in this country, but there was no limit on grants to attend conferences overseas. The solution is obvious: you should hold your next conference abroad. Somewhere nice and warm, like Monte Carlo” (SW 65).

Zapp’s speech reveals that the academicians seek more of non-academic pleasure in the guise of academic improvement, during their stay away, for conferences. They are particularly bothered about good food and comfortable accommodation, and of course, a certificate that would endorse their supposed commitment to their academic responsibilities and their contribution towards expansion of existing human knowledge. What is implicit about these moves is their real intention of elevating their status in academy.

A similar view is held by Ranga Rao in The Drunk Tantra (1994). Hairy, the ambitious and becoming Principal, knowing well the ways to success, conducts an International Seminar at St. Jaans with enormous funds from the UGC. Responses from all over the world including India-lovers, curious to visit a land of myths and Maharajas are over-whelming. Hairy, like Morris Zapp, of Small World, arranges for a grand variety of food for the delegates and a
compulsory trip to Agra, which of course, adds to the success of the seminar. Here, the author implies that any person conducting the seminar and the participants are equally pleasure-lovers, and that the success of the seminar is due to the fact that the participants’ expectations are satisfied with the organizers’ initiative in providing a fun-filled get-together away from the work place.

Most of the campus writers show how the delegates participating in conferences like to have sight-seeing tours and this aspect is brought out in No Onions Nor Garlic also. Srividya Natarajan humorously states that academics are interested in attending conferences for two main things, namely, eroticism and shopping. She says:

In general, academics come to such gatherings with two purposes in view. The first purpose is to renew their desiccated erotic lives, as Dr Chaturvedi, who had wisely guided his butter-biscuit to a dark corner of the hall, was doing at this very moment. His hand was definitely caressing the beauteous one’s right buttock . . . . The second purpose is to renew their wardrobes and to generally consume things and experiences. Everyone knows it is not the grail but the shopping bag that is the prize in the conference quest . . . . Some academics pursued this second goal right through Chunky’s paper, quietly discussing what sales were on, and where good bargains could be had. Instead of making notes, they wistfully made their Diwali gift lists and Christmas plans (NONG 284).

They satiate their needs with free travel expense, which of course, is paid by the funds provided for conferences or by the respective universities.

Natarajan, like David Lodge and Ranga Rao, does not fail to criticize the lavish food provided to conferees and their misuse of it when she says:
In the audience, there were many yawns and yearning looks at the doors. Many people had done themselves too well on the puri-masala and they were regretting this, for they were not only bilious but also sleepy (NONG 284).

Like Natarjan, Prabhanjan also hints at the Travel Allowance paid for attending such conferences. In his novel *Kagitha Manidargal*, he makes a biting satire on the conduct of seminars and guest lectures in the universities. He calls these seminars and conferences as inevitable rituals and thanksgiving ceremonies. Above all, he opines that these seminars and conferences serve as luxurious, salaried holidays, wherein lecturers attending these, attend with their spouses or concubines and would more or less enjoy another honeymoon.

Azhagesan, thus, invites Prof. Vadivelan for his seminar and metes out to him, the same kind of luxurious treatment that he had enjoyed, when he went to Valluvan University as an invitee of Prof. Vadivelan.

Azhagesan also feels much indebted to Vadivelan, since he includes Azhagesan’s book in the syllabus for his M.A. students. Azhagesan, in return for this indirect help rendered by Vadivelan, promises to include his books for his own students at the degree level. He also sanctions back and forth flight charges for Vadivelan while he had actually used the train. This aspect of returning the favours done among academicians is brought out by Rani Dharker also in *The Virgin Syndrome*. She uses the word “networking” (VS 107) to satirize this aspect.

Natarajan in *No Onions Nor Garlic* says that the real beneficiaries of the conference conducted by Professor Ram “were those who had their air-fare paid both ways, both by Professor Ram and by their universities, and had never made it to the Centenary Hall at all” (NONG 284).
Dharker, although devotes only a few pages to the protagonist’s life as an academician, puts forth enough satire on the conduct of seminars and conferences in academy. She shows how they, instead of propounding a healthy intellectual atmosphere for vital research and research oriented activities, are only insipid and mere bombastic functions that are conducted in a superficial manner for the sake of conducting it. It disillusions the first timers who attend it with huge expectations keeping in mind the idealistic notions of it. Persse Mc Garrigle, of Small World, for instance, is a first timer who attends a conference with high hopes of improving his knowledge. He confesses to Angelica whom he meets in the conference and with whom he falls in love at first sight, that he attends the conference “in order to improve himself” and find out “what’s going on in the great world of ideas” (SW 15). This “conference virgin,” disillusioned by the real picture of conferences which are really places where “highly educated, articulate, ambitious, competitive men and women” (SW 18, 313) meet and discuss, goes about trotting the globe from one conference to another in search of his lover. Here Mc Garrigle’s primary aim of improving himself and gathering knowledge in conferences is substituted by his search for his ladylove - Angelica. This is what Lodge and many other Indian campus novelists show. In fact, Small World is full of professors and so-called intellectuals who attend conferences and seminars mainly for improving their promiscuous affairs and licentious practices. Morris Zapp, Philip Swallow, Rodney Wainwright of Small World, Azhagesan, Parimelazhagar Perumal, Vadivelan of Kagitha Manidargal, Yana of Atom and the Serpent, Hairy of The Drunk Tantra and so on fulfill their amorous desires during conferences.

Lodge here describes the MLA, one of the biggest conferences as a place “to meet and to lecture and to question and to discuss and to gossip and to plot and to philander and to party and to hire or be hired.” He says that this mega conference “is a place where young scholars
fresh from graduate school look hopefully for their first jobs, and more seasoned academics sniff the air for better ones.” (SW 313, 314)

Thus, as the heroine of The Virgin Syndrome states, seminars and conferences fail to provide “mind blowing revelations” and “incisive analysis” (VS 107) and prove to be mere chatting halls and places of “Ritual and Romance” (SW 42).

A similar such view is expressed in the novel The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta also. Having attended an interview and having been selected for the post of lecturer, Geetika joins duty and her very first day in the new college witnesses a seminar, and she finds the experience intimidating. The “lady lecturers were sitting in a circle” for the seminar, the topic of which was “Teaching English Literature in India” (HEGM 158). They have a tea break, which gives them the opportunity to welcome the new entrant to the department and be introduced. When the paper reading resumes, Geetika is not able to concentrate on the reading and observes the others. There is a heated discussion on the paper read out by Arundhati Sen and Geetika is dragged into the discussion by Ranjana Malhotra. As Geetika fumbles to verbalize her thoughts, Nandini Jain Iyer comes to her rescue and tells Arundhati that her “paper doesn’t deal enough with the vexed question of third world ethos.” Arundhati irritably tells her that that is what they “have been discussing for the past twenty-five minutes” (HEGM 160).

This shows how a few teachers only pretend to be listening or being active during events like seminars and conferences but really do not show any interest in it. When finally Geetika thanks Nandini for having rescued her and tells her that she feels “rather inadequate” when all the others “seem to know much more,” Nandini tells her that “in six months, you (she) will begin to speak the language, never mind the understanding.” She also tells her that the
department poses too much of an intellectuality where the staff “think that everybody comes ready with intellectualizings…” (HEGM 160) She in fact, confesses to Geetika that she herself is not sure if she understands what goes on in seminars or conferences.

Geetika’s fiancée Ratish too attacks her “for the pretensions of the intellectual class.” He attacks the “over funded universities” that chew “much of the national budget.” He angrily says that for all the government does for the universities and teachers, teachers only talk a lot, without committing themselves to the profession with dedication. He criticizes the seminars saying that academics are interested in them only because their “eyes (are) fixed firmly on the west” (HEGM 166). Geetika realizes that she too wants to be “an elite scholar” She feels that small town colleges and the big ones were worlds apart. Small colleges were happy with simple things, whereas colleges, like hers, were “more tense, more unforgiving, more judgmental” (HEGM 166, 167). This is the reason why strict and dominating elite colleges like hers conduct departmental seminars every week. However, the purpose ultimately is not served because of the pretensions of the insiders.

Panjangam’s *Matthiyillulla Manidargal* (1982) exhibits the paltry exercise of professors getting their works published. Mani, an English Lecturer, tells the protagonist of the novel that he plans to meet the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University to seek his influence with regard to the inclusion of his poems in the P.U.C. poetry text. He feels that if he earns a name through this, it will be easy for him to influence the other Universities all over India, to do the same. Mani tells Pasiapalam:

You see, I am going to Annamalai University to see the Vice-Chancellor. It’s easy to influence! If I somehow make two of my poems be included in P.U.C. poetry textbook,
my name will spread far and wide. Then we can achieve the same in other universities too easily. Mani will come to be known in all India level (MM 110) (My Translation).

All these show the callousness and self-centered nature of the teachers who never fail to grab the bounteous benefits provided by the UGC and at the same time yearn for more through devious connivances. In fact, vehement criticism is made by the academic writers, on the misuse and the extravagant use of the “UGC munificence” (AS 287).

Rita Joshi in *An Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* brings out the hypocritical practices that take place during the conduct of seminars. She criticizes the way in which money is wasted upon individuals in the name of seminars and guest lectures. An English man in charge of some grants is given a chance to deliver a lecture, not because of his intellectual ability, but because of the powerful position, he holds. He is invited for the lecture sidelining a better speaker of the topic – an insider. Despite his slender ability and less effective speech, people flock around him, adulating his lecture. They do this in order to gratify their selfish gains.

The Principal in *An Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* prefers to invite politicians for every occasions within the college. Shyamala A. Narayan, a critic, rightly calls her “the lion hunting of the Principal” (154) since she “invites persons to speak / In college almost every week” (ANR 63) in order to get attention from persons of power. Once when a politician, a “female leader” is invited to inaugurate the overhauled canteen, she praises her as “an able woman” whose “skills are proven.” She says that she is a “forceful woman” who will “soon get her extension” (ANR 66). The politician also reveals that the Principal has promised that she would influence her students to vote for the politician’s party. Moreover, the speeches of the host and the guest endow praises and accolades upon each other, expecting mutual benefits.
Thus, Joshi shows that seminars or any intellectual meet is conducted primarily for the selfish or personal gains of teachers and genuineness takes secondary position.

Panjiangam, in his novel *Matthiyillulla Manidargal* brings out the pretensions of lecturers, when it comes to seminars or any conferences. The novel’s protagonist Pasiapalam once invites another lecturer, Mani to his house. Mani ostentatiously talks about his anticipated participation in the “World Poets Conference” in the Philippines. He tells Pasiapalam that three people from India have been selected to participate in the conference, out of which he is one. He plans to read one of his poems there. He also tells him that the conference has been postponed due to some political disruption in that country. He also states that he proposes to enunciate his newly found theory called ‘Maniyam’, probably named after him, there. Mani’s flamboyant speech provokes the protagonist to laugh at him and he thinks of the pretentious ways of such ‘hack writers’. Even though an English Lecturer, Mani is unable to speak flawless English but boasts of being one of the best English-speaking persons. On his departure, Pasiapalam feels that his pretensions are too much to take, but since it is harmless, he can continue his friendship with him.

Most of the campus novelists are interested in showing the University as a hollow place where malice and manipulations abound. A.S. Ratnam in his review of the novel *Atom and the Serpent* describes the university thus:

… a veritable area of darkness, replete with people who are notorious for insidious jealousies and intrigues, malice and backbiting, relieved only occasionally by beams of light emanating from genuine teachers, who are real seekers and dissemi
ators of knowledge and wisdom (114).
These novelists attempt to show the darker sides of the academic personalities who, like outsiders, are weak, contemptuous and jealous of their colleagues. Their jealousies involve them in scheming against one another and make them try to pull down one another. The university incumbents are capable of all the seven kinds of deadly sins and their education makes them exhibit those in a sly manner.

Prema Nandakumar in *Atom and the Serpent* presents evil in various forms and excels in her attempt to nullify the traditional ideal image of teachers through her viperous character Sheela Rani. Sheela Rani is in fact the serpent of the novel that is “a strange concoction of captivating charm and ruthless malevolence, seductive coquetry and brazen depravity, and flirtatious magnetism and impudent improbity” (Ratnam 114).

Like Prof. Yaugandharayana who is uninterested in research and students’ welfare, is Sheela Rani, a Reader of the Department of Econometrics. She is variously nicknamed by her students and colleagues as a “viper” (AS 22), “a hooded serpent” (AS 163), “a huge brown boa constrictor” (AS 171-2), “a venomous worm” (AS 176) and so on. She is known for her gossiping and makes backbiting her pastime. She is rightly described as “the scandal cyclotron of the University” and is notorious for her “prodigality in the creation of nicknames” (AS 22). Vatsa learns from her own conversation that she is a “classic class cutter” (AS 37). This “veritable mongoose” and a “slinky and venomous toad” (AS 98) is disappointed with her delay in getting promoted to Professorship. The irony here is that although she has not equipped herself with higher research publications, she is highly furious and criticizes the rules and regulations for the promotion to Professorship. Her fury reminds Vatsa of a serpent and he laughs at this sort of “priggish, swinish, preposterous set!” (AS 38)
Sheela Rani pretends to be a good teacher and comes through as a person who hates research, as she believes that an aptitude for research disrupts teaching. She unabashedly says that “the need for Higher education today is teaching, not research. But our authorities won’t understand this. No wonder Higher education is gravitating to the gutter” (AS 47).

Since she does not possess a Ph.D., she denounces the degree itself as a “stupid anatomical appendage.” Her primary nature is to vilify everyone and destroy battalions of lives through her gossips. She is portrayed as not possessing even a single good thought and “Nothing escapes her eyes [and] nothing is sacred for her tongue” (AS 47, 26).

Prof. Yaugandharayana confesses to Vatsa that the reason for cultivating Rani’s friendship is due to her belonging to a powerful faction that wages a constant war against the Vice-Chancellor. Moreover, Yana confesses that he did not want her syndicate friends and her husband – the Principal of the University, Dr. Dattatreya – to harm his schemes in making foreign trips under the auspices of research. Here, the author overtly criticizes the pretentious friendships that the academics hold. The academicians help one another not for intellectual progression but for safeguarding themselves from the exposure of intellectual fraud.

The political intrigues among the faculty and the rumours and misinformation circulating in the academy show the campus seething with “competing power groups.” The university does not really have any “academic community” which struggles for the advancement of knowledge but has only “feuding sub-sections” (AS 265), which are divided among themselves, and engage in constant fights. In fact, the highest official of the university himself – the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. D.K. Adhyaksha, is a victim to the hypocritical web that encompasses the university. Having been a good scholar in his youth, Adhyaksha is now busy with political intrigues and has lost his intellectual activities. He is perhaps “an academic-
turned-politician” (Ratnam 115) who indulges in “endless intrigues just to stay in power” (AS 262). He is a “wily Chanakya” (AS 285) who cleverly keeps his academic and ministerial staff intact. In fact, his trivial-mindedness is brought out when he is jealous of Yana’s Studbaker and never intervenes in Yana’s foreign trips that are made under the auspices of research, since he wants to keep himself away of such an “uncouth presence” (AS 100).

Dr. Adhyakasha always has some of the university staff, who are also syndicate members at his side and entertains them at his cost. He uses them as “necessary tools” to “manage and manipulate the university’s affairs.” He is laughed at by his staff who assign various nicknames to him and has Mr. Rahulkar, “the King’s favourite barber on his morning rounds” (AS 21) always at his side. The other constant companion of the Vice-Chancellor is Dr. Kavali Matsyachari, who better fits the position of politician than physician. He is rightly nicknamed as ‘Aspirinachari’ (AS 29) and dubbed “as our Nawab’s Court Jester” (Nawab being the Vice-Chancellor) (AS 38). Both Dr. Kavali and Rahulkar constantly amuse the Vice-Chancellor and curry his favour.

The author fills the air of the campus “with a surfeit of frivolities and rascalities.” There is a constant “fight for position and promotion and foreign deputation” – “a spectacle of waste and pettiness” (S. 87).

Prema Nanda Kumar’s withering contempt for such academicians is exemplified in her sketching of Prof. Yaugandharayana. “She is almost Swiftian in sketching” (Ratnam 115) Yana. Her epithets for describing him as, “an elephant” (AS 25), “a hyena” (AS 93), “a civilized gorilla” (AS 36), “a Hollywood Monster in ‘The Snows of Kilimanjaro’” (AS 93), and so on, show her utter contempt for this “unacademic academician” (Ratnam 115).
Yana (Prof. Yagaundharayana prefers to be called by this contracted form of his name) is lustful and is “a confirmed victim of sensual pleasures.” He is interested neither in his subject nor in his department and “is an utter disgrace to the Groves of Academy” (Ratnam 115). He makes his students pay for his drinks at the Silka Pinta Bar and even once attempts to molest Sheela Rani there. Apart from his unintellectual practices and over-ambitious nature, he has a strong contempt for his country. He suffers from nostalgia for America and as a result exudes “sophistication and spilled numerous Americanisms.” For every mouthful of food, there was sure to be a “godam” followed immediately by “this area of darkness.” He went on with his “what’s there in India ‘attitude’.” He is an amoral and a hypocritical person who is not truthful to his wife. He deceives her with complicated terms of atomic research and would make her believe “in the magic word ‘research’” (AS 24-25). By portraying such a contemptuous unacademic academician, Prema Nandakumar seems to be warning one against such wolves who litter the corridors of academy.

Considering the malice and hatred among the teachers and their jealousies against one another, Prabhanjan compares them to crabs put in uncovered baskets. He says through one of his characters that, “The baskets containing crabs will not be closed … because, if a crab tries to come up, the ones below will pull its leg and see to it that it does not reach the top” (KM 125) (My Translation).

Prabhanjan thus states that the teachers too would always try to pull down one another and manoeuvre to rise to a higher position. This squabbling for power is ridiculed at by most of the campus novelists.
Thomas Wolfe’s *Of Time and the River* (1935) better describes the jealous nature that exists among colleagues through its protagonist Eugene, who describes his jealous colleagues thus:

They wasted and grew sick with hate and poison because another man received promotion, because another man had got his poem printed, because another man had eaten food and swallowed drink and lain with women. And they smiled and sneered at one another… they never struck a blow but they spoke lying words of ambiguity, they breathed the weary hatred-laden air about them into their poisoned lungs (qtd. in Lyons 142).

*The Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* too brings out this aspect. JR, the newly appointed Lecturer and the protagonist of the novel, proves her publishing credentials with her reviews. When the strike of the teachers against the policy of the Government continues, JR reviews books and gets those published. The jealous colleagues of hers, unable to digest her fruitful activity express their negative feelings behind her back. Some even consider it a trash, and pray that this sort of writing will not “become endemic” (ANR 57). Those of whom like MW who are excited about the publication are happy since they have a prospective reviewer on hand who would review their anticipated works. This again exhibits the selfishness of the academicians in their relationship with one another. In short, the author shows most of the characters as “mean hacks (who are) mainly concerned with jockeying for academic position” (Lyons 142).

The authors bring out the jealous bickering nature that exists among the staff. The egoistic tendency of the staff is also brought out, when JR is praised by the Minister and the Principal for the success of the play. Teachers crazy to be in the limelight and eager for praises are unable to tolerate it when JR receives it.
Appreciating comments about the play irritate them and unable to tolerate the praise bestowed upon her, teachers like ET derogate it. She is also taken to task for the indirect outcome of the play which concludes with the enraged professor plunging a knife into the student’s heart. The students denounce the teachers by symbolically using the conclusion of the play. They draw “NV on a black board” as if she is “cutting a girl with a sword” (ANR 62). For this preposterous act of the students, JR is taken to task and criticized. Here, Rita Joshi artfully shows the teaching faculty using the students to throw garbage or spoil the image of their enemy colleagues. This aspect is well delineated by the Tamil writers also.

Panjangam in Oru Dalit, Oru Adikari, Oru Maranam, brings out the bickering nature of the teachers. Here, he shows how teachers exhibit their jealousy for one another in the workplace and satirically comments that hatred and jealousy are common among the colleagues in any workplace. But it is only in educational institutions that it rears its ugly head in the most unpleasing manner. Teachers, jealous of one another incite the students to go against their colleagues and even go out of the way to bribe students to create problems to their hostile colleagues. They stoop to the cheap level of bribing students with extra study materials and even go to the extent of taking them to movies.

Teachers involve in such unbecoming means since the administration gives weight-age to those faculty who are in the good books of the students. Instead of winning the students’ loyalty and affection through their straightforward and honest ways of being a genuine teacher in the true sense of the word, many teachers adopt crooked means to please them.

Balan, a recently recruited lecturer fails to understand these fraudulent acts of the experienced teachers and rebels against the students’ misbehaviour in an open manner. The
author here portrays an educational institution playing the dirty role of perpetuating caste discrimination.

The clever and cunning Principal, belonging to the upper caste, wickedly gets written complaints from both Balan and the notorious student for further action. The author shows how the Principal uses a student to act against his own member of the teaching community. Panjangam also paints a few mannerisms and habitual behaviour of certain teachers that would add to the understanding of the bickering tendency among the teachers. Balan, who is psychologically affected in the special treatment given to Dalits, always sits on the chair with his two legs crossed on the table. He does not put his legs down even while talking to the other teachers, especially to the teachers belonging to the upper caste. He does this in order to psychologically assert his equality or superiority over the other teachers.

Flattery is one important aspect that pervades in most of the campus novels. The campus novelists show how staff are interested in flattering people in power, in order to escalate in the academic hierarchy.

Some of the novels taken up for study bring out this aspect vividly. The novel *Atom and the Serpent* constantly shows the Vice-Chancellor Adhyaksha amidst a set of people like the university librarian, Mr. Rahulkar and Dr. Kavali Matsyachari, the chief university physician. They humour the Vice-Chancellor by telling him stories of his rivals and flatter him by talking ill of them. Mr. Rahulkar is the Vice Chancellor’s “permanent invitee” for breakfast and is maliciously called by the University staff as “the King’s favourite barber on his morning rounds.” These people know well “the gambits of a courtier” and are sure that “flattery is the best of medicine” (AS 26). They in fact get things done from Adhyaksha by pouring out gossips about Sheela Rani and Dattatreya.
Similar story line is found in *The Virgin Syndrome* too. Here too, it is the sidekicks of the Vice-Chancellor, who encourage him in his autocratic rule. SS, the Principal in *The Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* is strongly supported by her flatterers who do not give her up even in times of utter despotic ways.

Most campus novelists are interested in making a satiric portrayal of the Teachers’ Association or any Union of the teachers. The Teachers’ Association gatherings are usually portrayed as being lethargic and joyful and are shown as being more interested in sociability. They criticize the fact that Teachers’ Association is mainly being used as social get-togethers and for lunching and dining.

The novel *Atom and the Serpent* opens with the Visiting Professor Vatsa, a distinguished guest, attending “one of those formal selective dinners” (AS 12) given by the Staff Association. The dinner is an excellent meal that plunges him into a stupor. Such is a rich dinner given by the Staff Association which makes him think about the huge funds that the university gets and he contemplates that “nobody need say that our universities were ‘broke’” (AS 11). Vatsa’s first Association meet does not fulfill his intellectual quest and he is amidst discussions that are not about an “all-India problem, no aspect of developing world situation, no outmoded educational orthodoxy” but about “hatching a plot against one another” (AS 12). This shows teachers’ interest in personal growth and their indifference towards enhancement of knowledge for knowledge’s sake. Prema Nandakumar reprimands the gathering by showing that even in social gatherings they exhibit hostile feelings for their colleagues.

This aspect is dealt with in most of the campus novels and in *Oru Dalit, Oru Adikari, Oru Maranam*, Panjagam opines that very rarely serious issues regarding the problems of
teachers would be raised in such gatherings. He also wittily points out that the Teachers’ Association meeting would be crowded if issues relating to the salary or any benefits to the teachers are under discussion. In addition, the Association meetings would witness the domination of the pro-principal party. In fact, behind every meeting there would be the selfish notion of the principal and his supporters. They would dominate in such a way that the opposition party would be suppressed. The authors criticize these gatherings since instead of promoting friendship and goodwill among the colleagues it only exacerbates their vengeance for one another.

Once in a meeting regarding the promotion of a teacher, the Principal is also present. Balan is against a Tutor being promoted as a Lecturer since it would deny a Dalit an opportunity to join as Lecturer. The Principal plans to promote the Tutor in the place reserved for the Dalits. Hence, Balan opposes it and questions the very presence of the Principal in the meeting that is solely meant for the welfare of the teachers. The supporters of the Principal are irritated by his opposition and attack him sentimentally stating that by opposing their proposal he is denying his own teacher, friend and colleague the chance of being promoted. When Balan slightly stammers at this point, the other colleagues intervene, and finally, they succeed in stopping the promotion of the tutor.

The author here brings in the feud and strife that exist among the teachers. He brings out the hypocrisies prevalent amidst them and shows their keen interest in their own promotions and salary hikes. The teachers are no more given a positive portrayal of being noble and dedicated but are portrayed with their selfish notions. Each of them is interested in his own personal gains rather than in the welfare of the students and in enhancement of knowledge. He
shows how teachers use their Association or Union for materialistic gain rather than as an intellectual exercise.

A similar case is shown in *An Awakening: A Novella in Rhyme* also. The teachers Union is used for fighting for their rights and prerogatives only. The lecturers are ever ready to boycott their classes in order to protest for their selfish gains and hold meetings if anything against their interests happens.

*The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* too highlights the existence of the Teachers’ Association. When Geetika is in trouble with her Principal for being an unwed mother, Sona who used to be unfriendly with her earlier, promises to help her through the University Teachers’ Democratic Party. Sona tells her that this party headed by her boyfriend, Ranjan, is a powerful one. She tells her that Ranjan’s “trade union background has made him emerge as the Champion of teachers’ rights” (HEGM 183), and that Ranjan could also twist the arm of the Principal and stop the authorities from sacking Geetika on moral grounds.

In *The Virgin Syndrome*, a glimpse of the Teachers’ Association is found. The Narrator, impatient with the school authorities’ narrow-mindedness and their money-minting nature, challenges them that she would fight them through the Union. She is upset at the false and ridiculous charges that the school levels against the innocent attendant Ramu. They decide to fire him for his supposed practice of witchcraft. This instills in her the courage to rise against them and she threatens them saying that she would seek the help of the Union. On hearing this, the authorities panic and feel helpless. But again, despite her threats, the author shows her resignation from the school, thereby showing the domination of narrow-minded and corrupt academicians.
The educated teachers, despite being knowledgeable and learned, act superstitiously and in many cases, ignorantly too. Their superstitious nature and the irrational thinking are well delineated in The Virgin Syndrome. It hits at the superficiality and mediocrity of the academic characters, and the protagonist of the novel recounts her experiences “as a free thinking school teacher” (VS 34). She offers mild sarcasm when she thinks of the teachers working there. The thought of returning to school after the vacation gives her an unpleasant feeling, and she points out annoyingly, that she cannot tolerate it. She sarcastically comments that the teachers there are “humanoids” who are “sweeter than honey” always “dripping with honey” (VS 42). They are too good, disciplined and do not possess any of the “maverick idealism” that she has. This ironical description of teachers there, itself propounds the dislike of the heroine for the artificiality that surrounds the teaching job.

Further, the author brings out the hypocritical and superstitious nature of the insiders’ through a recurring incident that takes place in the school. This incident also throws light on the superstitious, narrow-minded nature of the academics. The teachers, old-fashioned, refuse strongly to turn away from their outmoded ways of thinking and behaviour. In their pretensions to uphold the dignity of teachers and the school, they put aside their rational beliefs and fail to reason out the real cause for certain happenings. The school once witnesses teenage girls between thirteen and sixteen swooning day after day in the same manner. The learned crowd is immediately worried about the reputation of the school and wants to do something to overcome the terrible crisis. They hold a meeting that exposes the stupidity and irrational thinking of the teachers who finally propose to go in for a Pundit to attend to the spell binding disease the school is facing. Later, with the help of a Pundit, the spirit is exorcised. However, even after the spirit slayer had supposedly driven away the spirits, a few girls are seen to faint. Mrs. Joshi, a
teacher, who actually recommends the Pundit, unashamedly explains it as the evil spirit making one last strike before departing.

Unable to tolerate these superstitious foolish explanations, and shocked at the charge of witchcraft attributed to the attendant Ramu who was earlier seen feeding a cat at the cemetery at midnight, the Narrator explains in a thanksgiving meeting, that it was not witchcraft at all but a strange case of sexual awakening – “another form of virgin syndrome” (VS 53).

When the Narrator utters the tabooed “S word in school”, “that purest of institutions” is shocked and the insiders look at her as they would at “a green slithery, scaly skin”. The authorities strictly stop her from using the “modern perverted theories of Freud” and decide to sack Ramu. Not able to tolerate learned people who are “in charge of progressive education in thrall of a whip-wielding witch doctor” (VS 53, 54), and unable to bear the injustice caused to a poor victim Ramu, the heroine challenges the school authorities and threatens them that she would make them fight the union and would also report the ridiculous charges of the school to the newspaper. Fed up with the limitless hypocrisy, pomposity and corrupt behaviour of the teaching community, the heroine, considered as a “trouble maker” and a “wild”, “insane” (VS 53) teacher resigns her job. The author thus by making the Narrator reject the academy, shows that she is merely interested in representing things as it is and proves that she is unable to give any solution.

Panjangam brings in the narrow mindedness of the teachers when he shows how certain teachers, keeping in mind the differences in caste, behave in an unacceptable manner. He shows in *Oru Dalit*, how teachers who are supposed to remove fear and elitism and the narrow-mindedness that pervade in the students’ minds, are narrow-minded themselves. Some teachers belonging to the *Dalit* caste berate Balan for having an unnecessary fight with the upper caste
students. They advise Balan to adjust with the misbehaviour of the students. Taking the caste fact as their fate, and scared and feeling ashamed of belonging to the lower sect, these teachers frown at Balan’s severe indictment of the student. They tell him, that as Dalits, they had no right to correct or scold their students, but will have to silently put up with their insolent behaviour. In doing so, they deviate from the prime function of a teacher, which is to correct the students and to be the torchbearers of society. Here, we can see that the University serves as a place that perpetuates social stratification and moral insensitivity instead of rooting it out.

This novel is mainly written to voice the injustices meted out to lower caste Dalit people. Here, since the protagonist, a dalit, is a teacher at the beginning of his career, a few chapters are devoted to his life as a teacher. The writer shows how caste feelings upset the order of a sequenced life, and how, a few teachers cunningly use it for their own ends.

Most of the campus novelists make a satirical portrayal of the conduct of interviews in educational institutions. Educational institutions that are supposed to rely upon the intellectuality of the teachers and their articulating powers should base their selection on merit, by conducting proper interviews. However, some of the interviews conducted by most of the institutions are mere rituals and there is a tendency towards fraudulence and recommendations. This aspect is brought out in some of the campus novels taken for study.

*The Virgin Syndrome* shows how its heroine enters the teaching profession – “a responsible job” without real passion for it. It happens accidentally when Mr. Bendre, the Director of a school, invites her to fill in a vacancy as Std. II Class teacher. Unable to imagine anything as “worse” as teaching, the protagonist agrees to attend the interview since “it might be nice to earn even the pittance the school offers” (VS 28) until she gets married. The interview was attended by fifty people, all of whom, except the narrator are wasting their time
on, as the school authorities “had decided in advance who they would select” (VS 29). The interview proves mere eyewash and the Narrator is selected more for her acquaintance with Mr. Bendre rather than for her brains. This deceptive act of the school does not affect her much as does the revelation that the school receives enormous donations for admitting students. This is the other instance that the author brings out about the school conducting fake interviews for children in order to admit them. The author highlights how these interviews set fallacious standards for its admission, where money plays the foremost role.

As Neelam Saran Gour, in her article “Of Fallacies, Phalluses and Falsehood” (1998), puts it, “Dharker excels in a special outrageous cranky – wonky style” (33). With this outrageous style, she makes her heroine take a “dig at a wide range of subjects”, starting from “bride burning” to “the extraction of large donations by schools” (34).

The author also provides social satire in the novel when she expresses her disapproval of educational institutions’ money-minded tendencies. She shows how there is a mad craze among the public for English medium schools. These schools thrive on the donations or “blood money” (VS 44) of children and have lost the conventional sense of services that educational institutions initially stood for.

Feeling sick and shocked about the materialistic nature of the school and its administrators, the Narrator questions the principal and the Director about this. They laugh at her innocence and ignorance and add to her rage by telling her that they are not as bad as “some schools and colleges (that) take donations from teachers for giving them the job” (VS 46).

This is yet another critique on the double standards of educational institutions that the author mentions casually. She makes a dig at the hypocritical ways in which the crazy politicians make periodical noises about abolishing English in India but would sneak “their
own children into schools in America” (VS 46). Rani Dharker, like Panjangam and most other campus novelists, only presents the problems before us through her heroine but stays away from making any solutions to them.

Another interview episode that the novel portrays is the last interview of the Narrator. The Narrator, having suffered the kind of mediocrity and hypocritical behaviour of the school authorities, resigns her job and resettles as a lecturer in a University. She becomes a temporary lecturer in the department of English at an Indian University and feels herself “getting fond of the temporary realm” (VS 104). Unusually enough, she loves the job of teaching adults, and is proud of being a University teacher. The college students regard the teacher as someone who “personified Absolute Knowledge” and who is “not a divine being exactly but somebody close” (VS 106).

In the University, she is free and works happily. As is usual in universities, she finds two groups - one acting against the Vice-Chancellor, and the other, obsequious to him, currying his favour. She is shocked at the Vice Chancellor’s “emergency powers” (VS 136) which is used against the staff for his own selfish purposes.

She is happy with her two colleagues – Rajesh and Neeta, who have also been appointed on a temporary basis. They chat and criticize the staff’s hypocritical behaviour. Here, the author, as is typical of any campus novelist, shows the discriminating differences between the temporary and the permanent ones. The temporary lecturers, unlike the permanent ones, have to be careful, and should, except for their classes be strangers and distant to all that happens in the university. According to the author, failing to do this would spell doom for their careers. Rani Dharker shows how innocent unambitious lecturers find no place in universities and only the clever ones could survive, through an incident.
When Ashish, a well known, “widely published hardworking scholar” (VS 137), once comes to know that the Vice-Chancellor has ordered an enquiry commission to look into the affairs of his department, in general, and him in particular. He acts immediately at this revelation and very hypocritically fasts unto death under the auspices of doing it not for himself but for the good of the institution. Although the heroine and the other lecturers feel that Ashish should be supported, it is only the heroine who openly supports him “in the pandal raised for the professor’s fast-undo-death” (VS 138). The others back out knowing that their support will be noted and that would end their career. They knew that signing the supportive papers of Ashish “would be suicidal.” They are also worried about “the VC’s secret agents” who are “perched precariously on the branches of a tree, binoculars pointed in the direction of the pandal” (VS 139).

The Vice-Chancellor dies of a heart attack when the “Governor asked him to resign”, because of Ashish’s strike. Ashish does not feel guilty or worried about the Vice Chancellor’s death, but softly comments, “that neatly takes care of the problem” (VS 140). Here, not only the hypocrisy of Ashish but also his ruthless tendency in being indifferent towards the Vice Chancellor’s death is brought out. His slyness is spelt out in his cool ambitious victory over the Vice-Chancellor.

The heroine who is true to her career and who supports Ashish for his just intellectuality, suffers at the hands of the Vice-Chancellor’s men. After five years of her tenure in the University, she attends the sixth interview and is not selected since the men on the interview panel were strong supporters of the Vice-Chancellor. Knowing “that they would not get promotions or be sent abroad on fellowships” due to the demise of the Vice-Chancellor, they find their future bleak. Hence, to avenge their anger, they reject her in the interview and
“unnerve her by asking strange questions.” Their stealthy malice shows itself in their discarding her from the job and the innocent heroine realizes that despite fighting for “the right cause” (VS 144), she is punished in the most cunning manner.

This interview proves to be the last in her life and she decides after this to turn into an artist. She realizes her artistic capabilities and puts an end to attending fake interviews that are used for avenging one’s frustrations, to show favouritism and so on. She rejects educational institutions because of their hypocritical ambitious nature. The author also shows through this that the just and honest are not rewarded always and that they have to struggle hard against the forces of dishonesty and manipulations. The Narrator, leaving the educational institution in favour of life, shows as in Lyons’ words, “that the institution is so unintellectual that there is little hope for education” (135).

*The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* presents two interviews that the heroine faces. The first interview is for an ad hoc appointment at Guruvayoor College. This interview just proves to be a rendezvous with a teacher-in-charge, where the teacher-in-charge is a person who is biased against the candidates coming from institutions other than the Capital University. In the beginning, itself she comes to know that Geetika is not from the reputed Capital University, but from Jana University. This fact, itself, disqualifies Geetika. The interviewer states, “she was looking for a person from the Capital University who would be able to handle the teaching at a very short notice” (HEGM 150). However, regardless of this, she interviews Geetika by asking a few questions related to literature. Despite Geetika’s confident conversation and despite her assurance that she “will be able to handle Antigone” (HEGM 151) if given a chance, the teacher-in-charge firmly refuses telling, “it’s a question of not taking chances with the future of the students”, and hence, she “would prefer a student from Capital
University” (HEGM 150). The author, pointing at the mediocrity of people in responsible positions hints at the limitations within which academicians encircle themselves and who judge a person’s worth by the institution he comes from instead of his/her true caliber. She rejects Geetika mainly because she comes from Jana University, a University that did not produce many creamy intellectuals.

Geetika’s other interview is at Lajpat Rai College and this time she experiences “a proper interview and not a rendezvous with a teacher-in-charge” (HEGM 155). While Geetika waits outside, two other applicants, in order to make Geetika lose her confidence, talk familiarly and intimidatingly of a few of the panel members. They express that one of the members, Sen, taught Rushdie and this seems to be good news to Geetika. When she is called inside, she remembers Prof. Ranganathan’s advise to “agree with whatever the interviewers say and try to tell them whatever you know about the subject.” She has a view of seven members – a mousey looking woman with jet-black dyed hair, a scratch face and a few others, and “the board looked alarmingly large” (HEGM 155). The interview takes place behind closed doors, with a University expert, a Governing Body Representative, the Principal and the Teacher-in-charge. The moment the members come to know that Geetika is from Jana University, she receives condescending looks. Despite that, she manages to be successful in the interview and is posted as Lecturer in the Department of English at Lajpat Rai College.

Prema Nandakumar lashes out at the way appointments are made in the universities. Once when a group of teachers is having a conversation at the Staff Association Hall, they talk about the strife between Sheela Rani and Dr. Kumar for the promotion to professorship. When the topic arises, some of the lecturers incite Dr. Kumar by saying that the Vice-Chancellor who has the powers to “make and unmake” can appoint “a yes-man committee” and his favourite
candidate (probably Sheela Rani), after entertaining the committee by wining and dining at the Silka Pinta bar, can be selected. Saying this, they then advise him to apply for a job elsewhere and to forget his professorship. Kumar, refusing to leave his Alma Mater, comments that all places are the same, and firmly tells them that if the selection committee selects Sheela Rani, he will immediately “move the High Court for a writ, and obtain a stay” (AS 225).

Vatsa, a silent listener of all this feels terribly “deflated” and ruminates that “Ritualistic interviews and wrong appointments had become the rule rather than the exception in the Indian Universities, and no wonder there was such breezy whirling talk” (AS 226). These wrong appointments may be the reason why some teachers feel “defeated” (HEGM 4) with their subjects.

Another instance of “ritualistic interview” (AS 226) is found in Panjangam’s *Matthiyillulla Manidargal*. Here, the protagonist, Pasiapalam, is very confident that his wife will get the job as a Lecturer in the college she has applied. He is not only confident but also works towards it. He goes to the college where she has applied for the post, meets people and is happy that the owner of the college belongs to his caste. Finally, she gets the appointment and Pasiapalam is happy that the interview is after all eyewash and that people on the board had helped him by selecting her.

Many campus novelists, including the pioneer novelist of the genre, David Lodge, satirize the interviews and the process of selection of candidates for teaching posts. They expose the fraudulent activities of educational institutions even in this.

The campus novels indict at the lavish grants that are provided by the UGC to the Universities. When Sheela Rani talks condemingly about her Head of the Department to Vatsa, she pronounces how he spends most of his time outside the department. He was “always
on this Commission and that Committee flying hither and thither choosing professor and making money. The perfect commutologist in fact or just vanishes to the States or Australia or Sweden on some blessed Grant” (AS 46).

There is also a constant fight among the staff over the UGC funds allocation. Dharma, a Reader of the Atomic Research Department enlightens Vatsa on Yana’s politics regarding UGC funds. He tells Vatsa that Yana “went on slashing the funds for “the pupils and projects.” He fixes the TA for Vandana who is supposed to take part in a seminar in an Australian University. He also tries to divert part of his colleague’s funds to help Vandana prolong her stay in Australia. He does this since he plans to “go to the same place in another six month’s time for a stint of eight-weeks” (AS 219). Here, Dharma hints at the promiscuous nature of the Professor and the disguised purposes of seminars.

Vatsa, listening to this, just says, “the UGC wastes plenty of money anyway” so why did they have to “make an issue of this.” Dharma replies that this sort of wastage of UGC funds over “the people who promiscuously buzz round all the time” (AS 219) should be stopped, and hence, he cries for a need for revolution. Most of the campus novelists are constantly of the opinion that in the name of research, UGC wastes money on academicians, who are probably not serious about this proposed research but only misuse the funds in a clever manner. This is condemned by the campus novelists.

The University, which is usually connected with the image of light and knowledge is portrayed by the campus novelist variously. Prema Nandakumar feels that instead of calling the University campus as ‘Groves of Academy’ it would be better to use “Gales” as synonymous for “Groves” (AS 257). The violence in the campus prompts her protagonist Vatsa to call this “Temple of Learning” as “a madhouse”, which is of course “not the only one in the country”
Vatsa wonders if the “citadels of learning were indeed going through a demented phase” where “unreason had the better of reason” (AS 258). He wonders “where were the ‘Groves’?” and “whither had ‘Academy’ gone?” (AS 250).

In the very beginning of the novel itself, Vatsa gets the image of a prison to describe the University and feels that it looks “more like Craick’s Paradise in the Andamans” (AS: 11), and its stony walls remind him of a prison-cell. The same prison image is evoked for the educational institution in Chetan Bhagat’s Five Point Someone: What Not to Do at IIT (2004). Ryan, one of the three protagonists calls IIT, which is supposed to be “the best college in the country”, a “damn jail.” He says that people in it work like “moronic drones until midnight,” all the time “mugging, testing and assignments” (FPS 14, 25). Another novel that brings in the image of prison to one of the “best” colleges in Delhi University is Joker in the Pack: An Irreverent View of Life at IIMs (2007). The protagonist of the novel views his days in his college as “four years – of rigorous imprisonment” (JP 19).

The Virgin Syndrome, too, concentrates a little on the image of the educational institution. The Narrator or the un-named protagonist returns to school after the holidays. She offers mild sarcasm when she thinks of the teachers and the working atmosphere there. She feels horrible going back to a place that is like “St George’s Dragon, with fire coming out from its mouth and smoke from its ears.” Here, the usually associated image of the educational institutional being a temple is sarcastically portrayed as hell and the persons residing there are either mere “humanoids” (VS 42) or dragons that emit fire. She visualizes the function of the school as a “scene out of Hieronymus Bosch’s hell” (VS 43).

Panjangam too comments through one of his characters, Mani, in Matthiyillulla Manidargal that the educational institutions that are usually regarded as “temple(s) of
knowledge” are no more that. They have become “place(s) where the Lepers stay” (MM 100). These novelists, like their western counterparts, are happy to call the citadels of learning “pandemonium” which naturally indicates that the inmates are Satan and his group. This probably is not an exaggerated view if the current educational set-up, with its business-like work mechanisms is taken into consideration.

These novelists also use nicknames in order to be sarcastic towards the characters. They bring in this aspect that is commonly used in campuses. All the selected novels for study show the campus seething with nicknames. This practice of nicknaming shows how the academicians are hypocritical and how they express their anger or sarcasm or any ill feeling towards the other characters through dubbing them with what is predominantly known of a person. Hypocritical affection shown among the academics take the primary form of dubbing them with artificial names – sometimes funny, sometimes venomous. Even people holding higher offices in universities are victims to this. Prema Nandakumar’s Vice-Chancellor is a “wily Chanakya” (AS 285) who excels in the art of manipulating and politicking. He is called by Sheela Rani as “the decrepitudinous old Goose” (AS 161), “Tribal Chief” (AS 14) and so on. Sheela Rani herself does not escape from this and she is dubbed as “GP”, the “Glittering Parrot” (AS 28), “the Scandal Cyclotron”, (AS 22) “Classic class cutter” (AS 37), “serpent” (AS 160), etc. Prof. Yaugandharayana is variously named as the “elephant”, “Phoren Monkey” (AS 144), and so on. The Principal of the University is sometimes called the “Otter”, and at other times, “Brihannala” (AS 14).

In the novel, Five Point Someone: What Not to Do at IIT, there is a variety of nicknames for Professors like “the testy design prof, the painfully dull solid mechanics prof and the assignment-maniac thermodynamics prof” (FPS 85), and so on.
Dharker also presents an interesting account of nicknames in her novel. The Vice-Chancellor who “had spies all over the campus” (VS 135) is a real dominating chief and is “the male version of Crochety queen in Alice in Wonderland.” Like Prema Nandakumar’s Vice-Chancellor, this Vice-Chancellor too had the staff currying his favour. The staff get scared of his “emergency powers” (VS 136), which he often uses to demote them and to enquire into the activities of teachers. Mr. Patel and Mr.Trivedi are called the Vice Chancellor’s sidekicks because of their obsequiousness towards the Vice-Chancellor.

Indian Tamil novels too exemplify this special trait of campus novels. In Matthyillulla Manidargal, the Principal is nicknamed “crocodile”, “Goyabelse” (MM 100) etc.

Some of the campus novelists show how some professors work as teachers without real interest and dedication. For instance, The Narrator’s colleague in Oru Dalit, Oru Adikari, Oru Maranam expresses his dislike for the job by saying that his brothers and other relatives enjoy a luxurious life by serving as doctors and engineers, and it is only he who slogs as a Lecturer. This comment is made out of his dissatisfaction with his job. He says that the teachers are powerless people and hence, he is not satisfied with this powerless job. He says:

What is there in this shameless teaching profession? How much shame we’ve to undergo! We prepare day and night for the classes and despite putting strenuous effort, there’s not a student who listens with concentration. Is there a satisfaction? What life is this? What a job? (109).

The same feeling is also exhibited by Mani in Matthyillulla Manidargal. Mani expresses his view that the teaching job is a shameless one since teachers prepare day and night but students do not concentrate or care about their studies. He feels that his efforts go waste. Mani’s dislike for teaching literature emanates when he says that they “have only become spoilt
and ruined in having gone after literature” (MM 109). He says that while his friend, Hameed-like people, write exams and rise high up in life, they destroy themselves having opted for literature and teaching.

The feeling of considering the teaching job as a powerless job is not common in Tamil literature alone but also in Indian English literature. The novel *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* shows this. Geetika’s parents, both being lecturers themselves, advise Geetika to enter into Civil Services. They tell her this, since they feel teaching to be a powerless profession. Geeti’s father once tells her, “Lecturers had no powers over anybody not even over students, not even to pass or fail them in exams which were held by the University” (HEGM 16).

He tells her that their powerless position made people ignore them and “they were never taken seriously.” He opines that even “a clerk in the post office had more power” (HEGM 16) than lecturers.

It is because of their dislike for teaching that some teachers fail to do their job well. As seen earlier, the professor of the Government Desertvadi college does not complete his syllabus, despite the students reminding him many times, because he is more interested in ‘kavi sammelans’ (HEGM 23), rather than teaching. Moreover, he is disgusted at teaching an alien literature. The same is the case with another lecturer who feels it “stultifying” (HEGM 34) to teach in a Government college. By bringing in these cases, the novelists try to show that teachers’ disinterest in the profession lead them to be indifferent to students and their growth, which ultimately makes the educational institutions deviate from the traditional, conventional role it was created for.
Thus, it is interesting to note, that the few campus novels selected for study foreground the flaws and hypocrisies in the Universities and other educational institutions. The novelists taken for study give a harsh, realistic portrayal of the insiders with all their human tendencies that make them deviate from nobility.

Indian campus novelists Prema Nandakumar, Rani Dharker, Anuradha Marwha Roy, Rita Joshi, Panjangam, Prabhanjan and Jaisakthi aim at tearing off the masks of intellectuality of the professors and attempt at showing them capable of all the seven deadly sins like pride, envy, sloth, gluttony, covetousness, licentiousness etc. They show or depict the world of the University, as put in David G. Bevan’s words, as a “world of trivia and perversion, of vanity and deceit, of plagiarism and gratuitousness, of patronage and pretentiousness, of personal advantage rather than the pursuit of learning” (Bevan 103).

This kind of depiction of the University, which could be taken as manifestations of reality, shows the authors’ cynicism against the educational institutions serving as temples of learning and knowledge. They attempt to show the Universities as places where people are interested in materialistic comforts and are more bothered about their rights and prerogatives rather than in the execution of responsibilities towards the dissemination of knowledge.

These writers have touched upon most of the factors that underline and bring to the fore their various desires, ambitions, hypocrisies and jealousies. In their attempt to highlight these, come the other paltry issues of plagiarizing, flirtatiousness, ostentatiousness and so on of the professors.

It would be appropriate to conclude the Chapter with Jay Parini’s words, where Parini comments that the campus is “a place where humanity plays out its obsessions and discovers what makes life bearable” (qtd. in Showalter 4). David Lodge also expresses a similar opinion
in his article “Nabokov and the Campus Novel” (2008), where he states that the University or a college “with its own distinctive customs, seasons, rituals and foibles” serve as a place where “human behaviou-power, ambition, rivalry, lust” and “anxiety” “are displayed” and “anatomized.” The Universities are “staffed by human beings with ordinary human weaknesses and often more than ordinary eccentricities,” and hence, provide much material for campus novel writers to laugh at them. Mocking or satirizing the inmates of the Universities comes because Universities, instead of being “institutions dedicated to the disinterested pursuit of truth and the preservation of high culture” (par. 7) are being perverted.